

**2003  
EYES ONLY**

22 October 1953

## MEMORANDUM FOR:

General G. B. Erskine, USMC  
Office of the Secretary of Defense  
Room 3D928, The Pentagon  
Washington, D. C.

## SUBJECT:

Guatemala

1. Pursuant to the conversation of 15 October, between the undersigned and General Erskine, the following Guatemalan background data is forwarded.
2. During the past few years Guatemala has become the leading base of operations for Moscow-influenced Communism in Central America.
3. Ruled by powerful, anti-US President Arbenz, supported by a leftist coalition government, with all key positions below cabinet level thoroughly controlled by a Communist-dominated bureaucracy, Guatemala now represents a serious threat to hemispheric solidarity and to our security in the Caribbean area.
4. Essentially a primitive, rural country the size of Louisiana, with a population of  $3\frac{1}{2}$  million, Guatemala is currently engaged in an intensely nationalistic program of progress colored by the touchy, anti-foreign inferiority complex of the "Banana Republic."
5. With labor to a large degree organized according to Communist methods, and a land reform plan benefiting the peasantry, the present Arbenz government commands substantial popular support in spite of evidence of opposition in the capital, Guatemala City (population 180,000).
6. With an Army of 7,000, the well-trained and quite well-equipped hard core of which is stationed in the capital city, Guatemala maintains the balance of military power in Central America. This, coupled with Communist subversive activities extending across the Guatemalan borders, is a matter of increasing concern to nearby States, including Nicaragua, Honduras and El Salvador.

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7. The disturbing and subversive influence of Communist-dominated Guatemala within the Pan-American orbit, as well as an aggressively hardening anti-US policy targeted directly against American interests in the country, has recently caused the United States Government to adopt a somewhat firmer attitude towards Guatemala than heretofore.

8. It has been determined at the competent policy level of the Government that in order to isolate the target country (Guatemala), and strengthen the neighboring countries which are most immediately threatened, military aid agreements of some dimension (unspecified, although presumably quite modest) should be concluded with Nicaragua, Honduras and El Salvador. Implementation of such aid programs should be expedited on a priority basis and US military missions should proceed to the countries in question to supervise deliveries of military equipment and offer technical assistance. Negotiations with Nicaragua are progressing. Preliminary steps to encourage Honduras to follow suit are in progress, and El Salvador is expected to request assistance as soon as it becomes known that the others are scheduled to receive aid.

SIGNED

FRANK G. WISNER  
Deputy Director (Plans)

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